



MENTORCONNECT

Building Trust

BUILD TRUST WITH YOUR MENTEE



ABOUT MENTORCONNECT

[The MentorConnect program](#) brings together skilled immigrants and established professionals in occupation-specific mentoring relationships. Skilled immigrants entering the program have the education, experience, and language skills to succeed in the Canadian labour market. However, they may not understand the Canadian context of their profession, workplace culture, or know how to translate their skill sets. Often what they need are the local insights and access to professional networks that a one-on-one connection with a local mentor can offer.

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BUILDING TRUST

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“People often talk about ‘creating’ trust as though it were something we conjure up at will. Trust emerges slowly and tentatively from experiences that create the conditions for it.”



Tips on How to Build a Trust with your Mentee

Here are some tips to facilitate trust development in your mentorship:

- **Be reliable**, consistent, patient, and persistent with your mentee.
- **Encourage** your mentee to take the lead in deciding what you will do together.
- **Tell** your mentee what positive qualities or behaviours you see in them.
- **Have fun** together and create shared memories.
- **Listen** to cultivate understanding—rather than only giving advice.
- **Support and encourage** your mentee to achieve the goals you have set.
- **Be trustworthy** and deliver on your commitments.

Example:

Sarah, a marketing manager with ten years of experience, was paired with Alex, a new marketing associate, in a company mentorship program. Sarah understood the importance of building trust to create a productive and supportive mentoring relationship. Here’s how she applied the tips:

Reliability and Consistency: Sarah consistently met with Alex every two weeks, never missing a session. She was always on time and well-prepared, showing Alex that he could rely on her. When Alex faced challenges, Sarah patiently listened and provided persistent support, helping him navigate through them.

Encouraging Mentee Leadership: At the beginning of each session, Sarah asked Alex what topics or projects he wanted to focus on. For instance, Alex expressed interest in learning more about digital marketing strategies. Sarah allowed Alex to lead their discussions and activities, empowering him to take charge of his learning journey.

Highlighting Positive Qualities: During one of their sessions, Sarah told Alex, “I really admire your creativity and enthusiasm. Your ideas for the recent campaign were innovative and showed great potential.” This recognition boosted Alex’s confidence and motivation.

Creating Shared Memories: To build a stronger bond, Sarah and Alex attended a marketing conference together. They participated in workshops, networked with other professionals, and even explored the city’s famous landmarks. These shared experiences made their relationship more enjoyable and memorable.

Listening to Understand: In their meetings, Sarah made a conscious effort to listen actively to Alex’s concerns and aspirations. Instead of immediately giving advice, she asked questions to understand his perspective better, which made Alex feel valued and understood.

Supporting and Encouraging Goals: Together, Sarah and Alex set specific goals, such as mastering a new marketing tool and developing a personal branding strategy. Sarah provided resources, shared her experiences, and encouraged Alex at every step, celebrating his progress and offering constructive feedback.

Trustworthiness and Commitment: Sarah always followed through on her promises. When she said she would review Alex's project proposal by the end of the week, she did so diligently. Her consistent reliability reinforced Alex's trust in her.

By being reliable, encouraging Alex to take the lead, highlighting his positive qualities, creating shared memories, listening to understand, supporting his goals, and being trustworthy, Sarah successfully built a strong foundation of trust with Alex. This trusting relationship not only enhanced Alex's professional growth but also fostered a positive and supportive mentoring experience.



Additional Considerations for building a trusting relationship with your mentee:¹

- Create a safe and supportive environment where the mentee feels they can share their challenges, goals, and aspirations.
- Show up on time for your mentoring meetings.
- Follow through on your commitments.
- Be authentic and transparent.
- Share your own experiences, successes, and failures with your mentee.
- Acknowledge when you don't know something or when you make a mistake.
- Be curious and attentive by asking open-ended questions that encourage your mentee to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Listen without interruption or judgment.
- Be respectful and affirming of your mentee's opinions, values, and choices even if they differ from yours.
- Avoid imposing your own agenda on your mentee.
- Praise your mentee's strengths, achievements, and efforts.
- Be humble. Be human.
- Communicate regularly with your mentee (see *What are the Five Cs of Communication?* below).
- Listen without interruption or judgment (see *How Do I Actively Listen?* below).

WHAT ARE THE FIVE Cs OF COMMUNICATION?²

For better communication with mentees, try to be:

Clear:

What is the purpose of the communication?

- Keep a positive tone.
- Make your communication easy to understand.
- Limit jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations.

Concise:

How to communicate effectively?

- Use active language versus passive language.

¹ Adapted from Search Institute, searchinstitute.com and Manza & Patrick
The Mentor's Field Guide

² Adapted from Forbes.com.

- Know your audience.
- Practice, practice, practice.

Correct:**How to communicate without error?**

- Make sure communication is accurate.
- Review grammar, spelling, and autocorrect errors.
- Make sure claims are true and factual.

Complete:**Does the message contain all the relevant information?**

- Include all key details.
- Answer any questions that may be asked.
- Provide any other supporting information that may be helpful.

Courteous:**Is the communication in a polite, friendly, professional, and open way?**

- Look at communication from the recipient's perspective.
- Deliver communication with assertiveness, which is a balance of courage and compassion.

WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?³

Active listening for mentors involves fully engaging with their mentees to genuinely understand their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. This means giving the mentee undivided attention, maintaining eye contact, and providing affirmations such as nods or verbal cues like "I understand" or "Tell me more." Mentors should paraphrase what the mentee has shared to confirm understanding and ask open-ended questions that encourage deeper discussion. This approach not only builds trust and shows empathy but also empowers the mentee by validating their experiences and insights. By practicing active listening, mentors create a supportive and respectful environment that fosters the mentee's personal and professional growth.

**How Do I Actively Listen?**

- **Repeat or paraphrase what is heard.** Periodically check in with each other to ensure understanding.
- **Be prepared.** Re-read the meeting agenda beforehand and make sure you are prepared.
- **Declutter your space and screens.** Focus on the conversation and avoid distractions.
- **Pay attention to the speaker and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication.** This may include eye contact or other indications to show you are engaged in the conversation.
- **Do a posture check.** Sit up straight and limit posturing that can signal defensiveness or disinterest (i.e., crossing arms).
- **Take a minute to be mindful.** Take a deep breath and focus on the present moment before starting a conversation.

³ Adapted from Chronus.com

WHAT CAN I ASK MY MENTEE?

The goal is to demonstrate you are prepared and have clear ideas of questions you want to ask your mentee.

- Ask clear, specific questions
- Avoid overly vague or broad inquiries
- Practice open and engaging dialogue
- Focus on key areas of growth
- Share experiences, successes, failures, and lessons learned
- Be prepared, not rehearsed
- Set expectations for the mentorship

Examples:

Questions you can ask your mentee:

- What motivates you?
- What are your goals for this mentorship?
- What's your preferred method of communication?
- How can we better prepare for our meetings?
- What are some challenges you face?
- What skills have been most beneficial for you?
- How do you achieve work/life balance?
- Are there any networking groups you think you should join?
- How did (or would) you get over feeling discouraged or unmotivated?
- What skills would be beneficial for you to work on?
- What could you have done differently in this specific situation that may have improved the outcome?
- Do you feel emotionally and socially supported at work?

DOS AND DON'TS WHEN BUILDING TRUST

What a Mentee DOES	What a Mentee DOES NOT DO
Take initiative and be accountable for own career.	Avoid difficulties; don't expect mentor to solve all their problems.
Avoid perfectionism; understand that mistakes are part of the learning process.	Sidestep work; don't rely on mentor to do their work.
Work hard and support other mentees.	Stay in their comfort zone; instead embrace new learning experiences.
Be enthusiastic about pursuing a wide range of professional experiences.	Exploit friendship; don't use the mentor relationship to avoid work or responsibilities.

What a Mentor DOES	What a Mentor DOES NOT DO
Listen, allowing mentees to discuss and explore issues and ideas.	Take over tasks that the mentee should be handling themselves.
Help deepen understanding of the industry and shape career aspirations.	Impose opinions or force the mentee into any direction; decisions lie in the mentee's hands.
Offer valuable feedback and facilitate open communication.	Use undue influence or manipulate the mentee by exploiting a sense of obligation.
Provide insights into workplace norms and expectations.	Show favoritism; maintain a balanced perspective.
Support networking opportunities and leverage their experience.	Expect mentees to perform activities outside of the MentorConnect program's roles and responsibilities.
Serve as an example and motivate mentees to embrace new challenges.	Act as a therapist.
Encourage autonomy through hands-on experiences and independent decision-making	Oblige the mentee to share information that is not relevant to the mentorship.